

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 TRSE-00 AID-05 /061 W
-----130552Z 044916 /10

R 122238Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3881
INFO AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 2341

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINR, EC
SUBJECT: TRANSITION TO CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT - PERIODIC SUMMARY

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THE TRANSITION FROM MILITARY TO CIVILIAN
RULE IS PROCEEDING, THUS IGNITING THE CAMPAIGN FIRE OF PRO-
FESSIONAL POLITICIANS WHO NOW ACTUALLY BELIEVE THAT THEY WILL
SHORTLY BE FIELDING CANDIDATES IN NATIONAL ELECTIONS. POLITICAL
PARTIES HAVE BEGUN JOCKEYING FOR POSITION AND ALLIANCES AND
NAMES OF POTENTIAL CANDIDATES HAVE BEGUN TO SPROUT LIKE WEEDS
ON THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE. END SUMMARY.

2. A DELEGATION OF VELASQUISTA PARTY LEADERS VISITED FORMER
PRESIDENT JOSE MARIA VELASCO IBARRA IN HIS LAIR IN BUENOS
AIRES TO WISH THE OLD MAN A HAPPY 84TH BIRTHDAY ON MARCH 29.
VELASCO ONCE AGAIN SPECIFICALLY WITHDREW HIMSELF FROM CONSID-
ERATION FOR ANOTHER PRESIDENTIAL BID. AT THE SAME TIME HE
SCOTCHED RUMORS THAT HIS PARTY MIGHT SUPPORT THE PRESIDENTIAL
AMBITIONS OF HIS FORMER VICE PRESIDENT, CARLOS JULIO AROSEMENA
(PARTIDO NACIONALISTA REVOLUCIONARIO). SAID VELASCO, "I
ONLY MAKE MISTAKES ONCE." IN SPITE OF VELASCO'S STRONG AND
SPECIFIC PUBLIC DENIAL, PARTY LEADER ALFONSO ARROYO IS STILL
TRYING TO MAKE VELASCO'S RETURN A PLAUSIBLE POSSIBILITY IN
ORDER TO KEEP THE PARTY UNITED AND A SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL
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FORCE. COMMENT: VELASQUISMO WITHOUT VELASCO SEEMS DOOMED AS
A SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL FORCE. THE ONLY QUESTION REMAINING IS
HOW WELL VELASCO LOYALISTS CAN TRADE WHATEVER QUALIFICATIONS
AND CONNECTIONS THEY CURRENTLY POSSESS.

3. ON JANUARY 20 THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY (MAJORITY SUAREZ
FACTION) PROPOSED THE CREATION OF A CIVIC FRON (FRENTE CIVICO)

OF PARTIES TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES OF JOINT POLITICAL ACTION IN THE UPCOMING TRANSITION PROCESS. THE CONSERVATIVES WENT SO FAR AS TO SAY THAT THEY WOULD NOT PROPOSE THEIR OWN CONSERVATIVE PARTY PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. ON MARCH 28 THE LIBERALS ACCEDED TO THE CONSERVATIVE PROPOSAL AND SUBSEQUENTLY ARNE AND THE SOCIAL CHRISTIANS HAVE EXPRESSED INTEREST IN JOINING THE FRONT AS WELL. ALTHOUGH THE PROPOSALS ARE VAGUE AND THERE HAVE BEEN NO SPECIFIC AGREEMENT AS TO WHAT MEMBERSHIP IN THE FRONT MEANS, THERE APPEARS TO BE A WILLINGNESS OF THE CENTER PARTIES TO DISCUSS THE FORMATION OF A SINGLE UNIFIED GROUP THAT WOULD SUPPORT THEIR JOINT INTERESTS. COMMENT: THE PARTIES INVOLVED IN THIS PUTATIVE COALITION HAVE POLLED 50 PCT - 65 PCT OF THE POPULAR VOTE IN THE LAST SEVERAL GENERAL ELECTIONS, AND THUS OUT TO PRODUCE A FORMIDABLE CONTENDER. HOWEVER, WHILE LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ATTITUDES ARE CLOSE ENOUGH TO RENDER PLAUSIBLE A COALITION, SUCH OLD TRIBAL ISSUES AS CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS HAVE PRECLUDED ANY ALLIANCE FOR 100 YEARS AND MAY BE DIFFICULT TO OVERCOME EVEN NOW.

4. ALTHOUGH ONLY IN THE RUMOR STAGES, THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT A CENTER-LEFT COALITION BUILT AROUND THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT (KIZQUIERDA DEMOCRATICA) AND THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTIES MAY BE FORMED. BOTH FACTIONS OF THE DIVIDED SOCIALIST PARTY HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR INTEREST IN JOINING ELECTORAL COALITIONS FOR THE UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. COMMENT: THESE COALITIONS ARE BEING FORMED BECAUSE OF MOST POLITICIANS' BELIEF THAT THE ONLY WAY TO DEFEAT POPULIST ASAAD BUCARAM IS TO PRESENT A UNITED FRONT AGAINST HIS CANDIDACY. AN IMPORTANT FRINGE BENEFIT COULD BE MUCH BROADER PARTICIPATION IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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GOVERNMENT THAN EVER BEFORE AND THEREFORE A STRONGER REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY.

5. AS MORE AND MORE PEOPLE ACCEPT THE LIKELIHOOD OF A TRANSITION TO CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT, THE NAMES OF POTENTIAL CANDIDATES BLOOM LIKE SPRING FLOWERS. ASAAD BUCARAM OF THE CONCENTRATION OF POPULAR FORCES REMAINS THE ONLY ANNOUNCED CANDIDATE, AND IS CAMPAIGNING IN EARNEST. ECCENTRIC ABDON CALDERON OF THE FRENTE RADICAL ALFARISTA, A LIBERAL SPLINTER, TELLS EVERYONE WITHIN EARSHOT THAT HE WILL RUN BUT FEW GIVE HIM A SERIOUS CHANCE. THOSE THAT ARE RESPECTFULLY CONSIDERED AS SERIOUS POSSIBILITIES INCLUDE 1956 LIBERAL CANDIDATE RUAL CLEMENTE HUERTA, EX-QUITO MAYOR JAIME DEL CASTILLO AND 36-YEAR OLD FORMER GUAYAQUIL MAYOR FRANCISCO "PANCHO" HUERTA FOR THE LIBERALS, BANKER JAIME ACOSTA VELASCO, QUITO MAYOR SIXTO DURAN AND CHAMBER OF INDUSTRIES PRESIDENT LEON FEBRES CORDERO FOR THE SOCIAL CHRISTIANS FOR CONSERVATIVES (THE RIGHT) AND PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE JULIO CESAR TRUJILLO, AND RODRIGO BORJA (IZQUIERDA DEMOCRATICA) FOR THE CENTER LEFT. COMMENT: OF THOSE WHO MIGHT CHALLENGE BUCARAM,

PANCHO HUERTA HAS THE WIDEST POPULAR ACCEPTANCE. HOWEVER,
HIS IS LIKELY TO BE IMPEDED BOTH BY HIS YOUTH AND HIS FEALTY
TO THE CANDIDACY OF HIS UNCLE, RUAL CLEMENTE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SITUATION, ELECTIONS, FORM OF GOVERNMENT
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977QUITO02341
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770127-0678
Format: TEL
From: QUITO
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770466/aaaacexs.tel
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Litigation Code IDs:
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Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: ec3fbda6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2832141
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TRANSITION TO CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT - PERIODIC SUMMARY
TAGS: PINT, PINR, PDEV, PGOV, EC
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/ec3fbda6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009